(b) if so, the area covered by the Desert in Haryana during the last ten years;

(c) the steps being taken by Government to decrease the desert area in Haryana and Rajasthan, particularly by tree plantation; and

(d) whether diverting the drainage water to the Desert areas will be helpful for cultivation and would stop the expansion of the Desert?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RURAL DEVELOPMENT (SHRI A. NARENDRA): (a) National Remote Sensing Agency (NRSA), Department of Space had mapped wastelands in the country using satellite data of different periods (1986-2000) at village/ watershed level. The status of wastelands in the country was again mapped using one period IRS LISS-III satellite data (Rabi 2003). The extent of wastelands in Rajasthan has registered a decrease by about 4.17 lakh hectares during this period.

(b) In 1994-95, a High Level Technical Committee set up by Ministry of Rural Development, adopting scientific criteria of moisture index, rainfall, irrigation resources etc. identified an arid (desert) aera of about 20.54 lakh hectares in Haryana spread across seven districts of the State.

(c) and (d) Ministry of Rural Development has been implementing the Desert Development Programme (DDP) on watershed approach since 1995-96 to combat decertification in seven States, including Haryana and Rajasthan, through activities like soil-moisture conservation, water resources development, crop protection, afforestation, pasture development etc. Till 2005-06, an identified area of 5.15 lakh hectares in Haryana and 31.82 lakh hectares in Rajasthan has been sanctioned for development under DDP.

Setting up of yarn depots

†248. MS. SUSHILA TIRIYA:
SHRI MOTILAL VORA:

Will the Minister of TEXTILES be pleased to state:

(a) whether in order to boost handloom industry, the Prime Minister has called upon to provide soft loan to the weavers;

(b) whether Government have also decided to set up 230 yarn depots for providing easy access of goods to handloom clusters;

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.

(c) if so, the places where these depots will be set up and by when these will be set up; and

(d) the number of people in lakhs being provided employment in the handloom sector across the country?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF TEXTILES (SHRI E.V.K.S. ELANGOVAN): (a) A proposal to provide credit to handloom weavers at reduced rate of interest is under consideration of the Government.

(b) and (c) A proposal to set up at least one yarn depot in each handloom cluster having 1000 looms or at places near the handloom clusters is under consideration of the Government.

(d) The general thrust of the handloom sector schemes implemented by Office of the Development Commissioner for Handlooms is to provide support for product diversification, design and skill upgradation and market access to the handloom weavers to augment their livelihood and increase their earnings. As per Joint Census of Handlooms and Powerlooms 1995-96, 65.51 lakh persons are engaged in weaving and associated activities in handloom sector.

Training to artisans under SGSY

249. SHRI RAVULA CHANDRA SEKAR REDDY: Will the Minister of RURAL DEVELOPMENT be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are aiming to establish a large number of micro-enterprises in the rural areas for the benefit of weavers;

(b) if so, the areas identified for this purpose during the current year;

(c) where there is also a proposal to train local artisans of weavers under the SGSY scheme;

(d) if so, the modalities worked out so far for this purpose; and

(e) the amount allocated/to be allocated, State-wise?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RURAL DEVELOPMENT (SHRIMATI SURYAKANTA PATIL): (a) and (b) No, Sir. No such proposal is under consideration of the Government. However, the office of the Development Commissioner for Handlooms has been